

Background Study for Initial Basic Interpretive Presentations
Rosebud Battlefield State Historical Park

Prepared for: The Parks and Recreation Division
Montana Fish and Game Commission



by:

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January, 1979

STATE OF MONTANA
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
HELENA, MONTANA

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RECREATION & PARKS

Office Memorandum

TO : Keith Seaburg; Atten: ~~Dan Vincent~~
FROM : Ron Holliday; By: Richard Mayer *R. Mayer*
SUBJECT: Rosebud Battlefield Interpretation Project

DATE: February 22, 1979


Attached is the final copy of the "Background Study for Initial Basic Interpretative Presentations" at the Rosebud Battlefield State Monument. This report prepared by Robert A. Murray, Historic Consultant, is a finalization of the preliminary draft sent to you earlier this month. We would appreciate your close review of this document and return any comments or changes to us so that they can be incorporated into the interpretative panels.

We plan to proceed with the preliminary sketches immediately and will forward the mockups for your review. Hopefully this project can be well underway within the next month or so.

RH/RM/sl

Encl.

cc: Holliday
Hyatt
Joppy



Background Study for Initial Basic Interpretive Presentations

Rosebud Battlefield State Historical Park

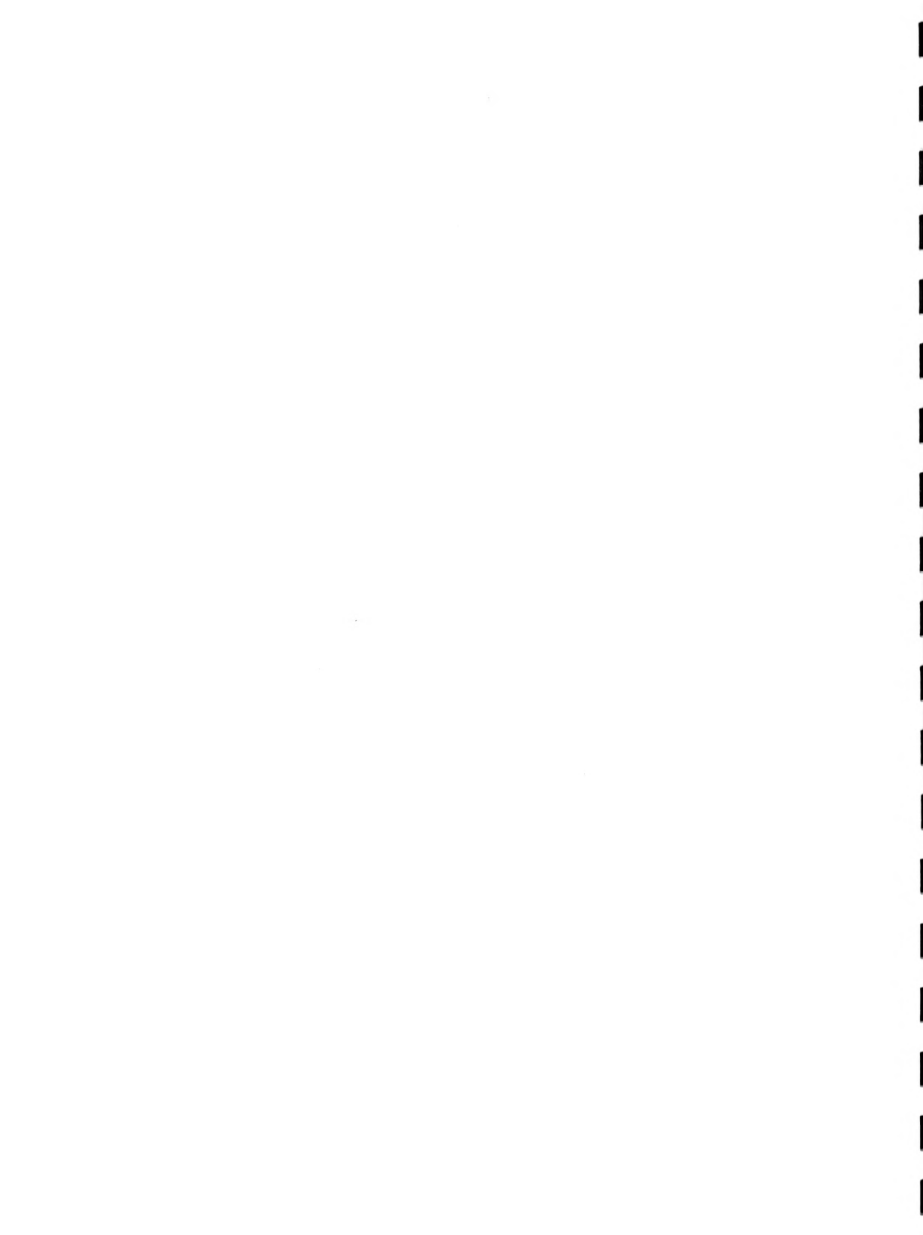
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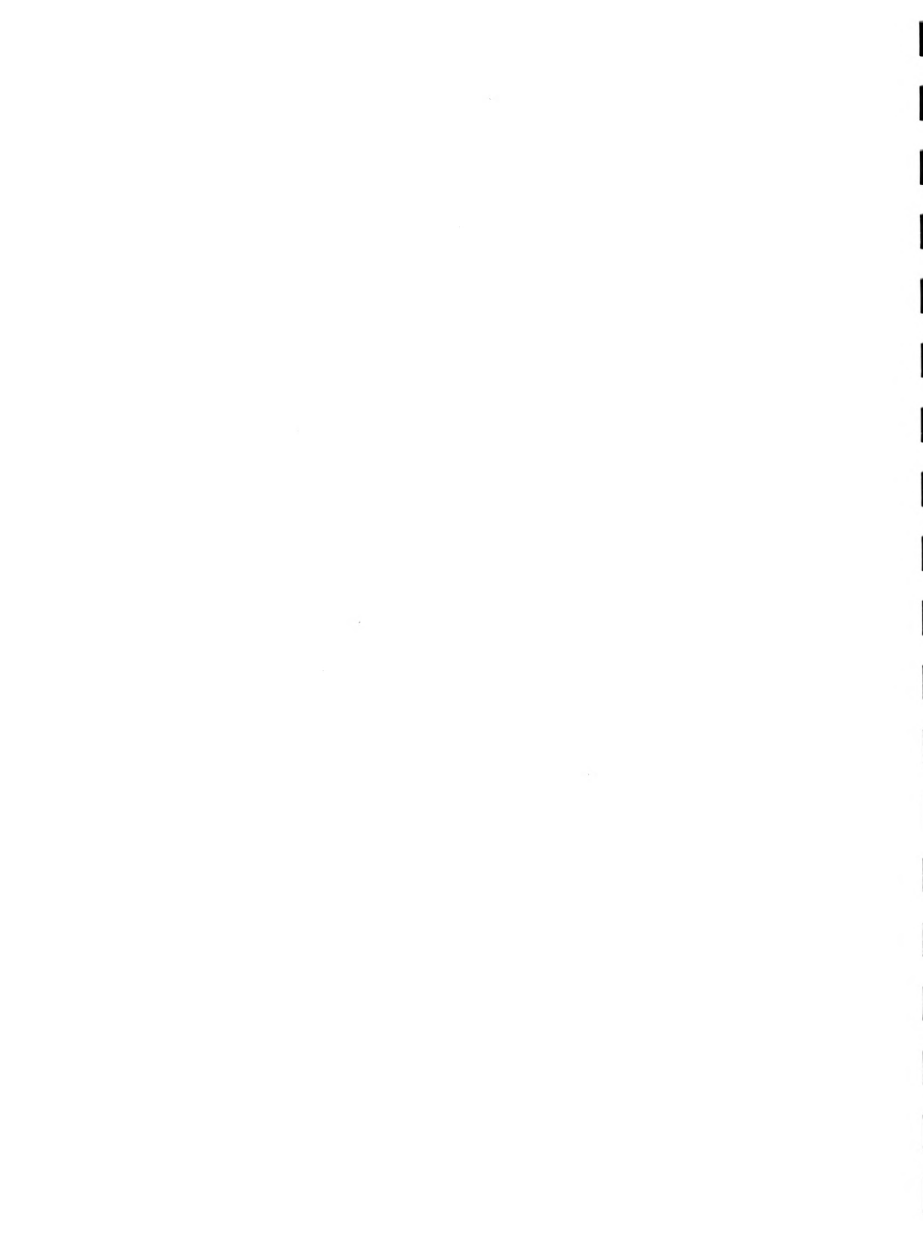
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Cover Art Courtesy

Old Army Press



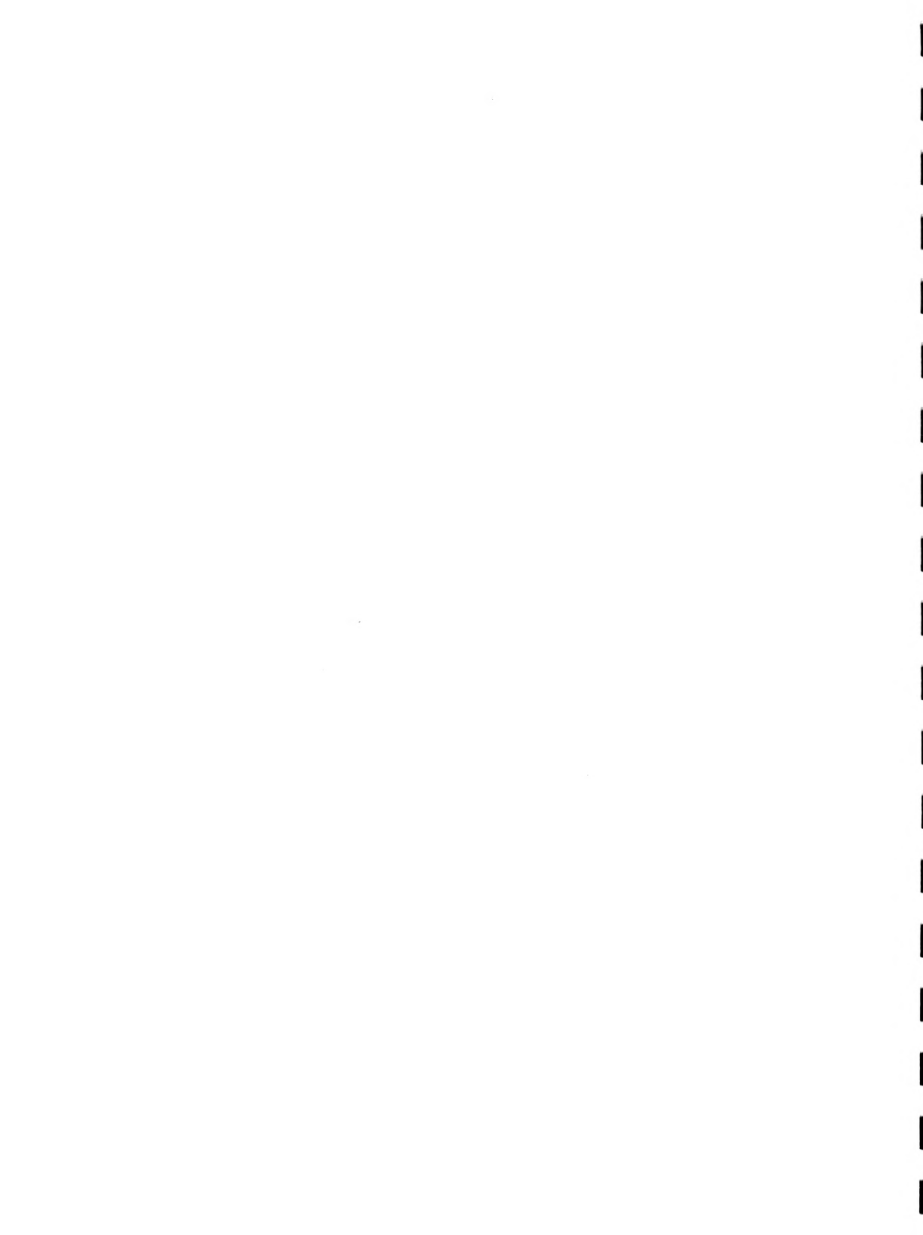
EARLY MAN IN THE REGION

Like the rest of the high plains, the archeological record in this portion of Montana extends back to 12,000 or 13,000 before the present time. For the first half of that period, successive cultural groups appear from the archeological record to have been specialized hunters of major big game species. They are today distinguished from one another largely by stylistic variations in the projectile points and the cutting tools that form the diagnostic indicators for each period. Most of those forms have come to light either in stratified sites or as surface finds over the entire area surrounding the Rosebud Battlefield.

From 6,000 years ago forward to 3,000 years ago, the material from reasonably well-dated sites tends to indicate a more diversified hunting and foraging economy, that may have been the result of somewhat drier climatic conditions prevailing then, or of the influx of new cultural groups or more likely a combination of these factors.

We do know that by 4,500 years ago, the pedestrian hunters of the region were using the buffalo jump as a means of slaughtering substantial quantities of animals for meat and hides. There is some possibility that the lowest levels found at the Kobold Buffalo Jump on the property may be from that period. Certainly later hunters from this "Middle Period" of Plains Archeology used the technique here about 2,500 years ago. And successive populations made use of some of these same buffalo jump locations clear up into historic times.

The Kobold Buffalo Jump possesses all of the main features of the classic jumps found up and down the plains. There is an open, well-grassed grazing area. Topographic constraints funnel upward from this area to form a route along which by skillful maneuvering and hazing, the hunters could gather the small herd of bison and start them moving toward the high edge of the rimrocks to the west. Then there is a downward "accelerating ramp" which would speed the herd and add momentum to prevent it's turning. Then there is the sharp cliff itself, dropping off to favorable



terrain for concealment of the tribe members who would finish off the bison injured in the fall over the cliff.

So, this jump is one of the easier ones to interpret to the average park visitor. It provides a highly visible link with the historic plains tribes and their various prehistoric antecedents.

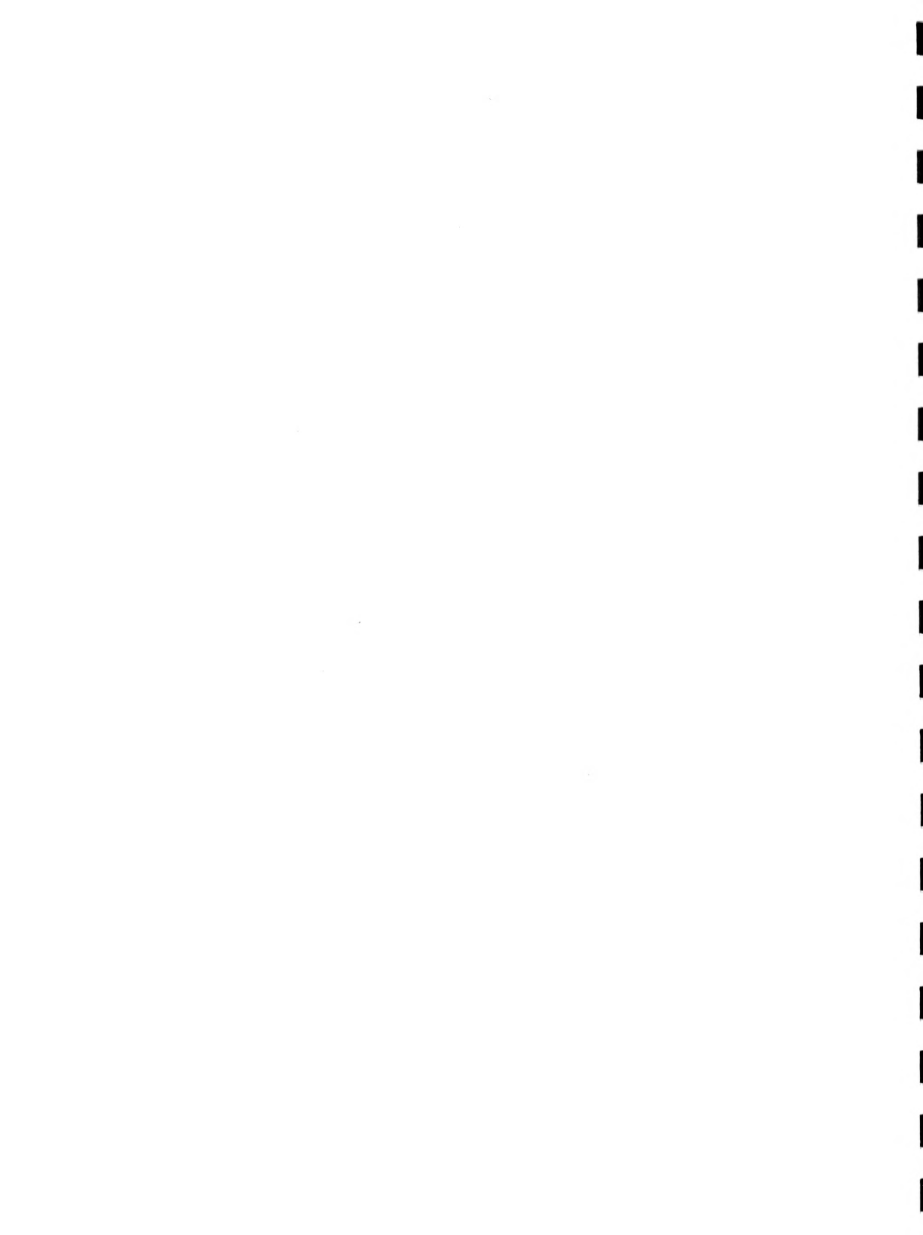
THE HISTORIC PLAINS TRIBES

Information obtained from traders accounts from around the periphery of the region leads us to believe that the Snake Indians (a single group comprising both the Shoshoni and the Comanche of later historical accounts) dominated the area for many years right up to the opening of the historical record. They were the first to bring the horse from the Spanish settlements of the southwest northward, along with steel edged weapons and tools and other items of Spanish trade goods. Early in the 18th Century, they extended their range as far east as the Black Hills and as far north as the Saskatchewan River.

At the eastern limits of their range, they met other tribes pressing westward as the forefront of a series of tribal displacements set in motion by changes in the tribal balances of power around the Great Lakes. These new tribes, with the Crows out in the lead, were just taking up the use of the horse, but they also had steel weapons and tools from the French and British traders of eastern North America. Perhaps more significant to control of the plains, they had guns, of a type we call today the trade-musket.

Crow hunting bands were wintering on the lower Yellowstone and on the Belle Fourche River by the 1740's. In the next fifty years or so, they gained control of the entire Powder Basin, the Big Horn Mountains, the Big Horn Basin, the Wind River Valley, and ultimately most of the plains country of central Montana.

Behind the Crow, in Dakota, another tribe of comparable size, the Cheyennes, and a much larger force, the western tribes of the Sioux, moved in to occupy the plains east of the Black Hills and to press the Comanches, Kiowas and Prairie Apaches off to the southward.

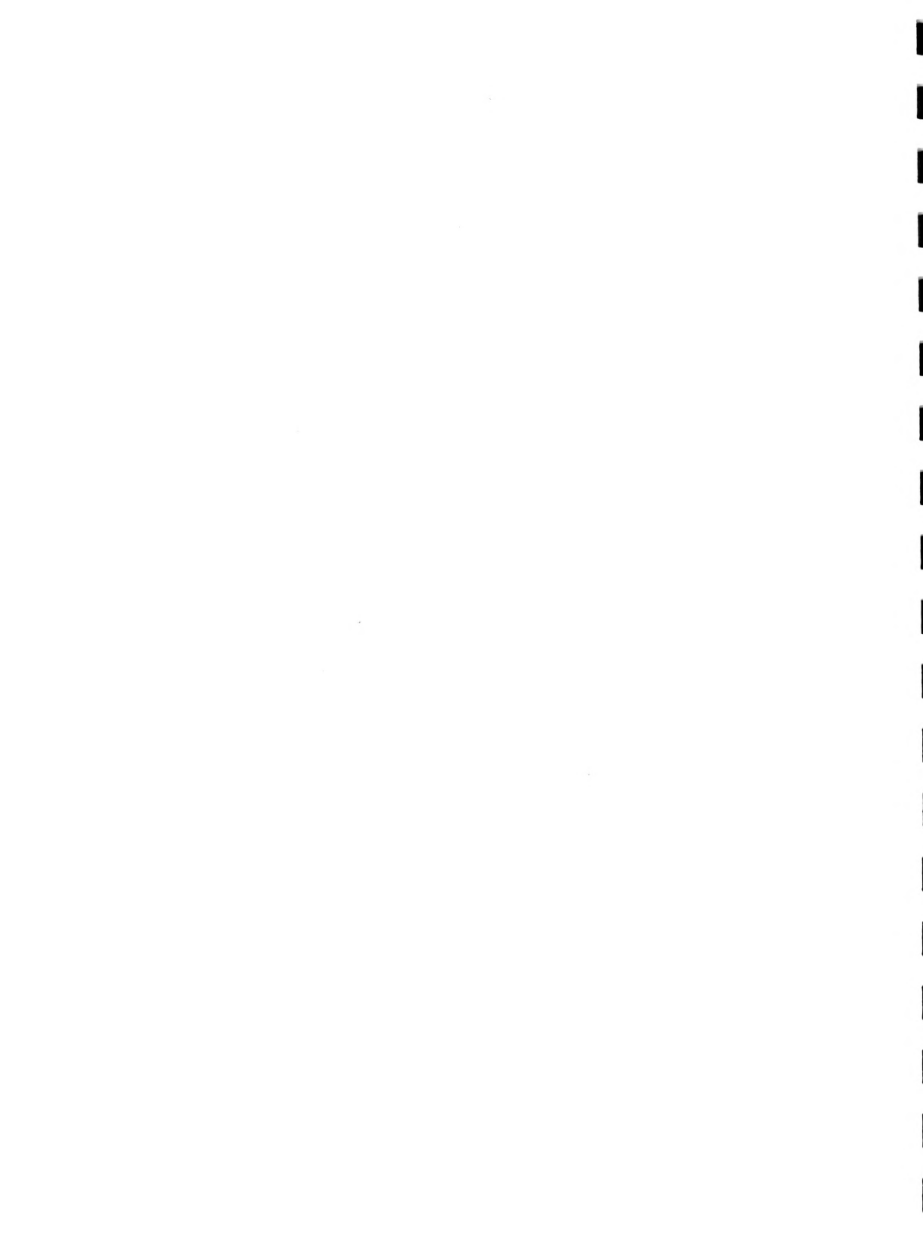


From around 1770 to 1868, then, the Crows were the dominant tribe in the region. After moving out on the Plains, the Crows and the tribes behind them took up the mobile, equestrian, buffalo-hunter way of life that the Shoshoni had lived before them from the time they first acquired sufficient horses to extend their customary range. With their advanced technology in tools, their mobility on horseback, the Crows became perhaps even more specialized buffalo hunters than early man had been. As opportunities for trade arose around the edges of the region, they specialized and commercialized their economy still more.

At the same time, their new wealth and new technology let them expand and intensify their ancient pattern of warfare against many of their neighboring tribes. By the time the first white men arrived in the region as a consequence of the developing fur trade, the pattern was well-set, and the "war-complex" of the plains well integrated into their religious and social life, as the mobile buffalo hunter complex was into their economy. For many Americans and foreigners today, these mounted Indians of the Plains of historic times have come to typify the American Indian, even though they held forth in this manner for only a little over a century.

EARLY EXPLORATION AND FUR TRADE

Ethnographic and archeological data indicate that European trade goods were moderately well-distributed over most of the High Plains and Northern Rockies by the beginning of the Eighteenth Century. Much of this distribution came as a result of intertribal trade radiating out from French trading posts in south-central Canada, British posts in the Hudson's Bay country and the Spanish settlements of the Southwest. It is impossible at this point to say precisely who the first traders were to directly contact the tribes of this region, for many of the men involved in the retail level of trade with the Indians were not particularly literate. Due to sheer proximity, it seems probable that the first-comers were from the French posts.

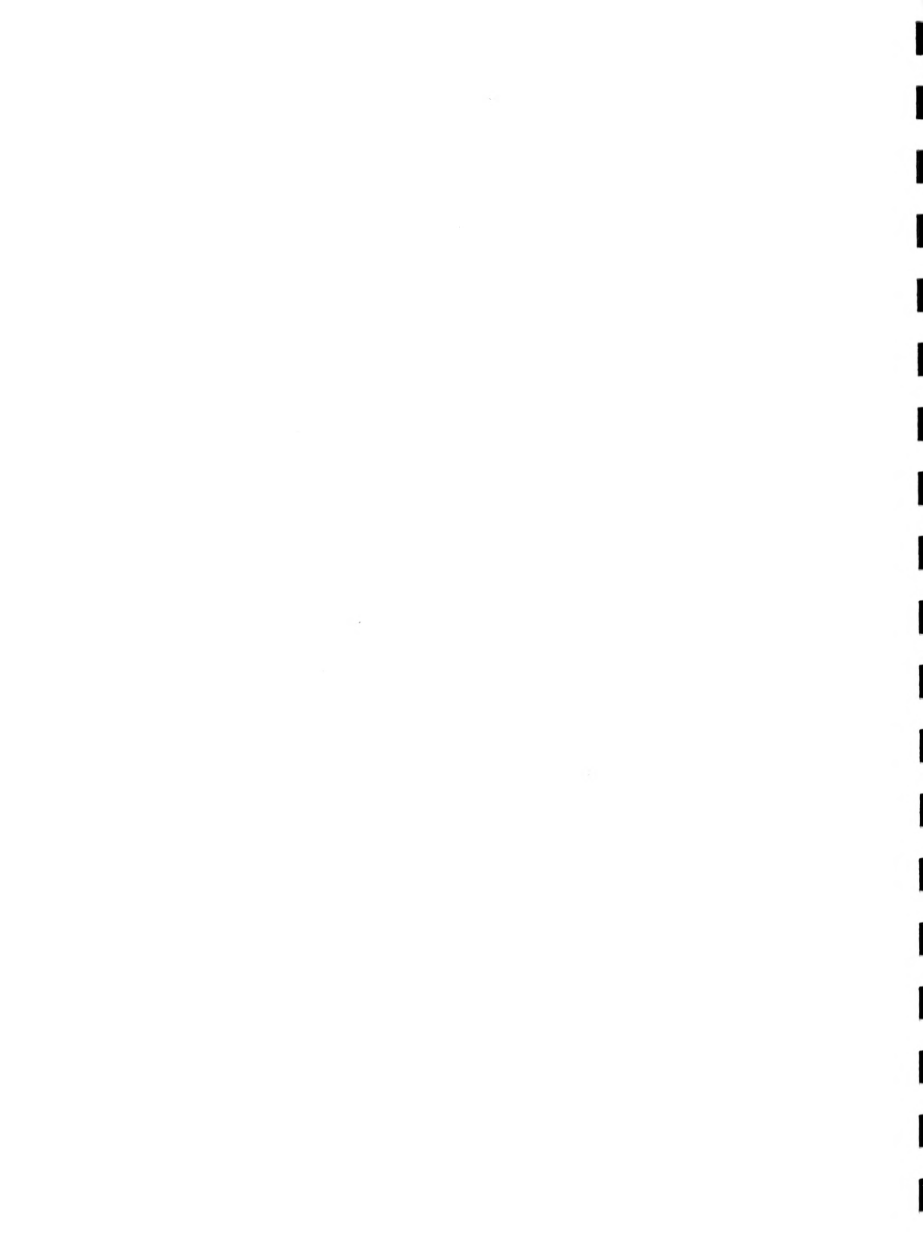


The first documented expedition into the country west of the Missouri from the region that is now Canada was that of Louis-Joseph and Francois la Verendrye in 1743. There has been extensive controversy over their route owing to a most imprecise written account. At the most it would appear they might have reached some high point to the east of Powder River from which they could see the "shining mountain", that another explorer identified with some precision two generations later. It is also possible they never even entered Montana, and there is nothing in their account to directly connect them with the area under study.

The first document to describe travel through the Study Area is the journal of Charles LeRays, covering a trip through this region in the summer of 1802. LeRays's account has been questioned on a number of points, primarily by those scholars with limited knowledge of the terrain and Indians involved, but it appears to contain sufficient internal evidence to convince us that it is indeed the account of someone who traveled through this area in that period. His party left the Hidatsa villages at the mouth of Knife River on July 3, 1802. They headed west up Knife River, out across the plains, and reached Powder River on July 10, 1802. They traveled down the Powder to its mouth, crossed the Yellowstone on July 18th, and moved up to the mouth of "Crooked River" which is evidently the Tongue. Between July 29th and August 24th, they moved in the company of a band of Crow Indians at a leisurely pace up Tongue River.

While the well-known expedition of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark struggled up the distant Upper Missouri in the summer of 1805 and probed for a route through the Rockies, another expedition struck out from the Hidatsa Villages on Knife River, headed for the Crow country. This was a Northwest Fur Company party, led by Francois Antoine Larocque. Larocque kept a daily journal that details a great deal about the country through which they passed. His estimates of distances are quite accurate when checked against modern maps.

Larocque traveled from the Little Missouri, west through the



"Blue Mud Hills" to strike the Powder River not far north of the Wyoming line on August 27, 1805. From here, his party passed by easy stages to a favored Crow campground at the foot of the Big Horns, far from the Study Area.

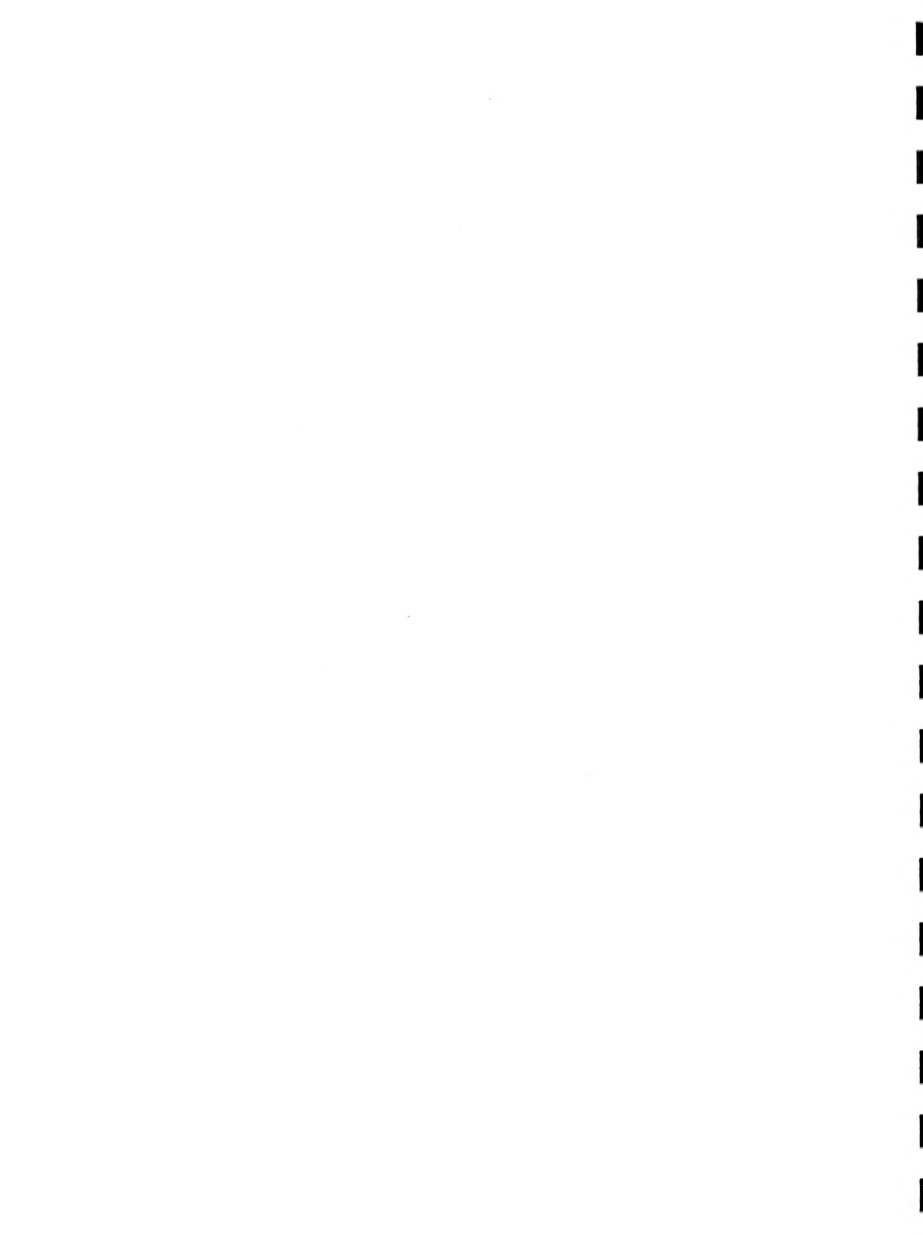
Both the LeRays and Larocque parties bypassed the area on their way out of Montana.

The returning party of Captain William Clark in 1806 floated the Yellowstone, and thus at its closest approach, passed about 100 miles from the Park. The travels of Larocque and Clark did firmly establish the Yellowstone as an effective part of an all-water route to the foot of the northern Rockies, and in effect, opened up serious interest in a direct exploitation of the fur resources and trading potential of the Yellowstone Basin.

Joseph Dickson and Forrest Hancock, along with a veteran of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, John Colter, were the first traders and trappers of record to venture in the area after the explorers left. They bypassed the Rosebud country as did most fur trade parties that used the Yellowstone Valley as their route.

Between 1806 and 1860, trading companies built at least eight trading posts on the Yellowstone and the Big Horn within a hundred miles north of the Park. Trappers working out of these posts as hunters, and traders dealing with the Indians of the region, but we find no really notable fur trade period incidents occurring within the Study Area.

The primary effect of the fur trade period upon the ultimate history of the Study Area was to provide a corps of guides and interpreters who were to prove highly valuable to subsequent stages of regional development, and to forever change the economy and way of life of the Indians. In this whole region served by the Yellowstone and the Upper Missouri, the "fur trade" did not go through the extremes of boom and decline that characterized some other localities. Instead it evolved in its own turbulent way from trading trinkets for highly valued furs to trading staples



for the more bulky buffalo robes, and one cannot mark a real "end" to the trade until the confinement of the Indians on reservations and the coming of the open range cattlemen.

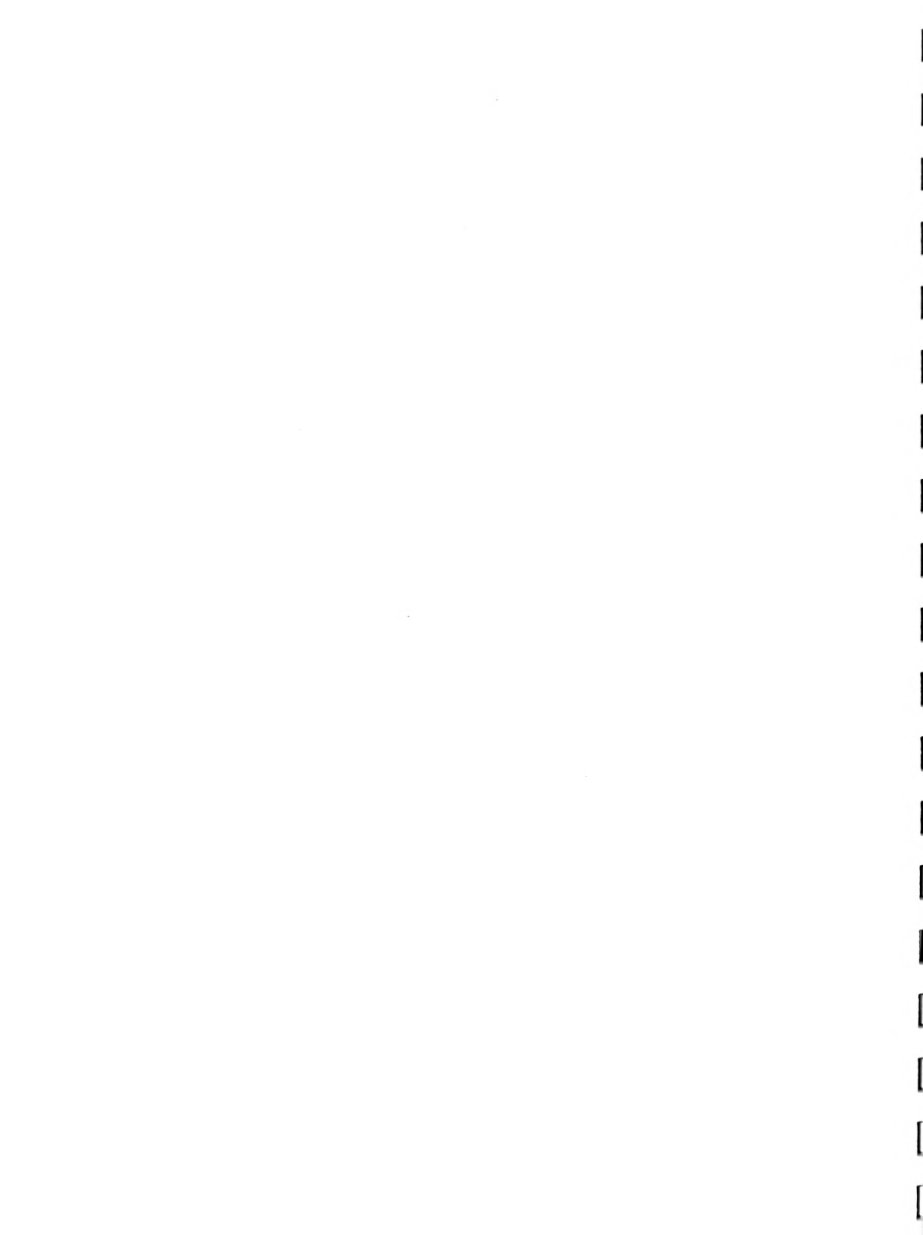
While many of the traders and their colorful "mountain-man" adherents gained an intimate familiarity with the country, they traveled light, and left little mark upon the land away from their main routes where lay the forest, wintering houses and the launch-points for the "bullboats" they used to carry their cargoes of furs and hides down the Big Horn and the Yellowstone to their main supply line on the Missouri.

A majority of the missionaries and traveling sportsmen at the fur trade period confined their activities to the country along the Upper Missouri on the one hand, and that along the Upper Platte on the other. There were several notable exceptions, both of whom had direct contact with Upper Rosebud Creek area.

Fr. P. J. DeSmet is today possibly the best known pioneer missionary of the Northwestern United States. While he made other trips through the Yellowstone Valley, he made one notable trip directly up the Rosebud in 1851, when he led representatives of several Indian tribes from Fort Alexander to Fort Laramie so that they could participate in the Horse Creek Treaty of that year. The following is his own account of the portion of the trip through the area:

"For four days we continued ascending the valley of the Rosebud, about one hundred miles, as high as the sources of the river. There again we found the soil light and sandy; it was covered with wild rose bushes, cactus, and artemisia of several varieties and intersected with ravines which were exceedingly difficult to be crossed with baggage-wagons. The shores of this river relieve the eye with an occasional group of cottonwood, intermingled with plum, cherry and service trees, which thrive here in undisturbed plenty.

"The Little Wolf Mountains, whose rivulets give rise to the Rosebud River, have in general a



charming appearance in their hills and acclivities-- and in their combined aspect as a whole chain. The absence of water, especially of spring water, is a painful privation to travellers in this season of the year. We found, indeed, some holes of stagnant water, in the dry beds of the rivers, but the taste is almost unsupportable. The buffalo herds are less numerous here than in the lands lying further north, owing no doubt to bands of warriors that roam over the space. Yet we perceived at every moment large troops of stags, and a great many deer and mountain sheep. We remarked recent races of enemies--such as the slain carcasses of very dangerous wild animals, the impress of human feet in the sand, concealed encampments, and half-quenched fires. Consequently, we redoubled our vigilance, in order to avoid a perilous surprise. A beautiful chief's-coat of scarlet cloth, and trimmed with gold lace, suspended from the branch of a tree, was perceived waving in the air like a floating banner. There was a race to win the prize; an Assiniboin having carried it off, it was most carefully scrutinized. The conclusion was that it had been offered only the day before by some Blackfoot chief.

"On the 22nd of August, we quitted the head of the Rosebud and crossed the mountainous train which separates it from Tongue River. The crest of this chain presents a continuation of sandstone cliffs, under a multitude of varied and fantastical shapes. The sides are almost perpendicular, and consequently very difficult to ascend with our wagons. The aid of every arm was necessary to sustain the teams. For several days we had had to camp by ponds filled with disgusting water."

Through the rest of the 1850's, the Crows remained in control



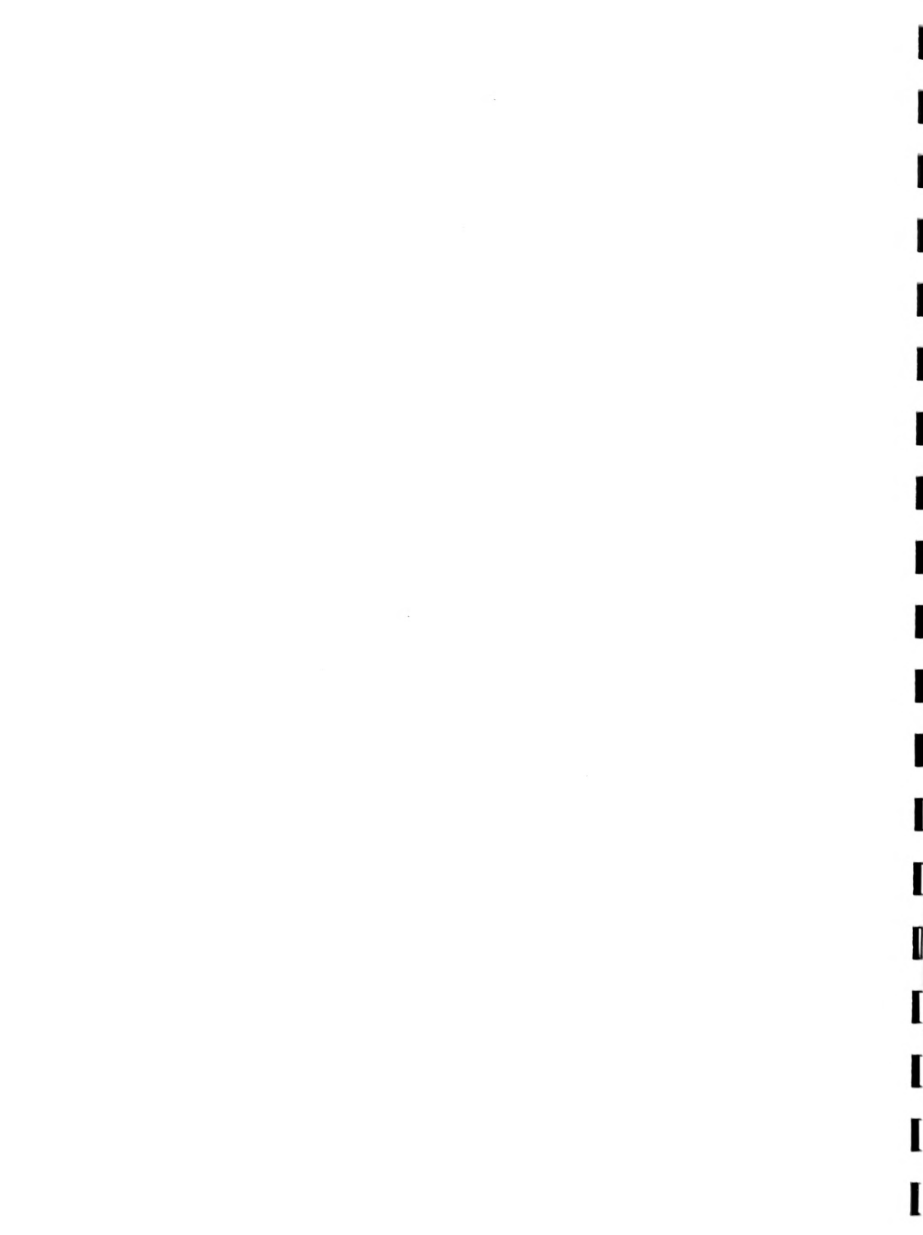
of the immediate area, and were kept supplied by traders operating out of posts such as Fort Sarpy on the Yellowstone. By this time they, like most of the surrounding tribes were inextricably linked to the white-man's economy through the trade in tanned buffalo robes that were almost their only currency for the purchase of knives, guns, spear and arrow points and many other utilitarian items, as well as the tent-canvas that was replacing buffalo hide, the cloth for many items of apparel and an extravagant quantity of beads, mirrors, wire, chains, and other aids to personal adornment.

Trouble with the Sioux along the Oregon Trail, far to the southeast in Nebraska aroused the Army's interest in better mapping for the region in the mid 1850's and ushered in a period of exploration when our best data on the Indians and on the country come from trained topographers and scientists hired by the Army.

GOVERNMENT EXPEDITIONS

Lt. G. K. Warren of the Corps of Topographical Engineers led reconnaissance activities of the Harney Expedition against hostile elements of the Sioux in Nebraska and Dakota in 1855. In 1856, he ascended the Missouri and the Yellowstone to the mouth of Powder River, and in 1857 he scouted the approaches to the Black Hills. Warren's reconnaissance made major contributions to filling in the map of the Northern Plains, but he did not set foot within the immediate area of this Park and his exploration is of relevance to it only in that it helped to lay the foundation for a more detailed exploration of the western Plains in 1859-1860 by a larger expedition under the command of Captain William F. Reynolds. The maps prepared from the data of this sequence of expeditions were the government's most used maps of the region until the late 1870's.

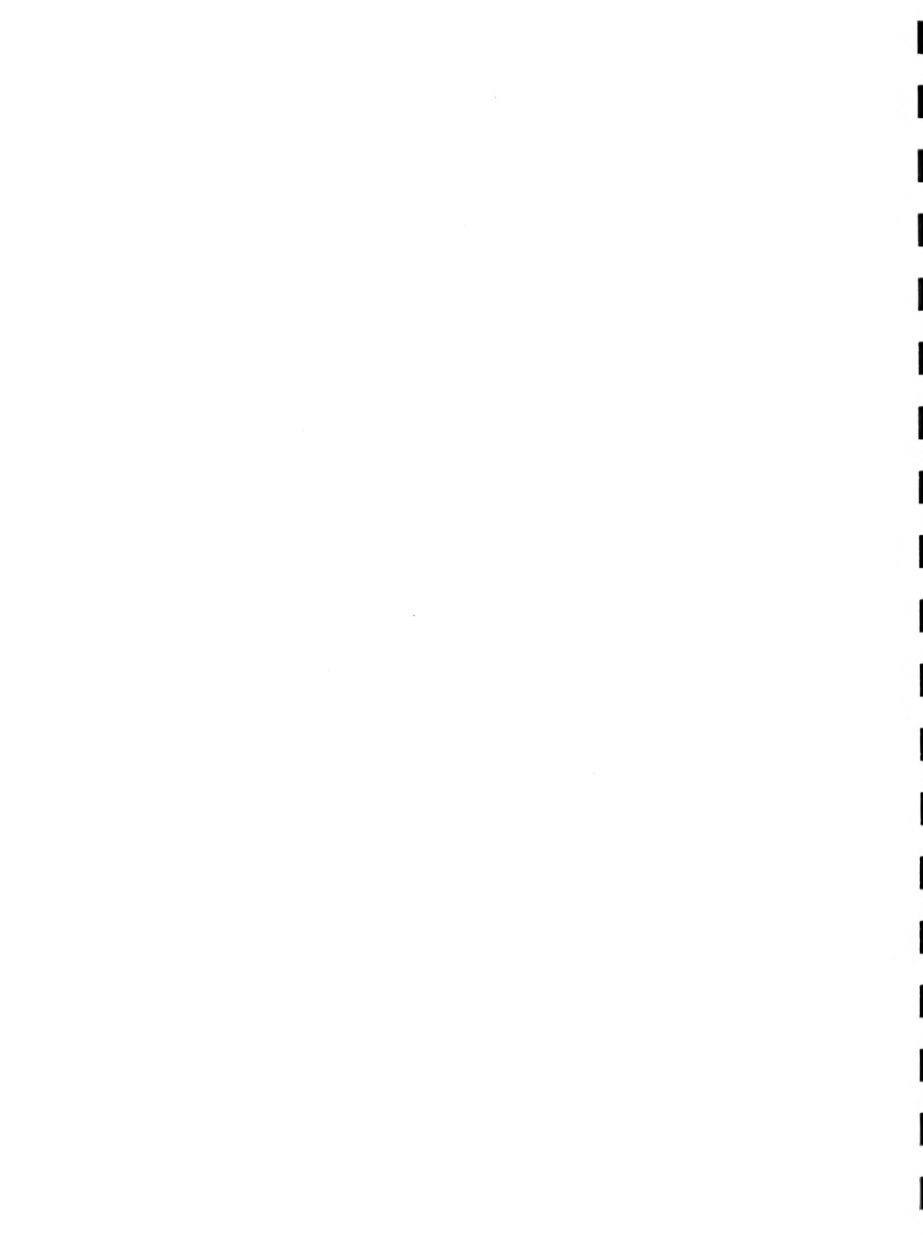
Captain William F. Reynolds took his far-ranging expedition out of Fort Pierre in Dakota on June 28, 1859, and headed west to



swing around the north side of the Black Hills. They struck the Little Powder on July 23rd, about 15 miles above its mouth, and marched on down to Powder River, which they crossed, entering the Study Area on the 27th. They went down the left bank of the Powder for six miles, and then headed out for six to eight miles across the plains to Mizpah Creek (named by Reynolds for the inscription on a seal he lost there). They explored for the best route over the divide to the west and pushed on deeper into what is now Montana.

Reynolds and his party visited Fort Sarpy II on the Yellowstone, and not far beyond that point they divided. Reynolds sent Lt. Henry Maynadier and part of the force southward up Tullock Creek, over to the Rosebud, which they ascended. They reached the big bend of the Rosebud on 11 September, probably camping not far from the lower end of the Park. Moving out into the hills to the south, Maynadier says:

"At the point where we left on the 11th of September, the course of the stream changes abruptly to the west, while the road continuing southeast ascends a ridge, affording a view of the tributaries of Tongue River. To the north the surface of the country is one mass of barren peaks, filling the whole space between Rosebud and Tongue rivers, and forming the middle of the three ranges of the Wolf mountains. Any attempt to traverse it with wagons is useless, as we came very near finding to our cost; the southern chain of the Wolf mountains was in plain sight, and our route lay in a valley along the foot of it; but happening to bear too far to the north, we soon found ourselves in a pocket, with no escape except by the way we entered. Retracing our steps we gained the proper road at an expense of five or six miles, which lengthened the day's march to 22 miles, and made it near night when we reached Tongue River, having a good road in its



valley, only interrupted in a few instances by ravines, not very difficult to cross and with good crossings of the stream when they became necessary."

From this point Maynadier pushed on southward out of the Study Area, toward the expedition's winter headquarters at the Upper Platte Indian Agency near Deer Creek on the North Platte River. The expedition's reports were not published until 1868, but their maps were of the greatest value in the military activity of 1865-1877. Reynolds with the rest of the expedition visited Big Horn Canyon and moved southeast past the Big Horns, to join Maynadier in central Wyoming.

OPENING OF THE INDIAN WARS

The discovery of paying quantities of gold in the valleys of southwestern Montana in 1862 ushered in a new phase to the development of the region. The Montana discoveries were not particularly a surprise to goldseekers in the west. Ever since the early 1850's prospectors and placer operators fanned out to the east of the California gold fields where most of them had learned their trade, and exploited a sequence of other strikes in Oregon, western Canada, and several parts of Idaho. With news of the new gold fields, they poured into the territory from the west, and quickly developed their major supply lines out of Oregon and Utah. As their numbers built up, parties of these men ranged far to the east of the original gold camps, probing the limits of country that had any prospect of paying gold sands.

The James Stuart party of 1863 ranged down the Yellowstone as far as the mouth of the Big Horn, but followed that stream up to the southwest and went back to the Montana settlements.

From 1864 on, substantial numbers of men left the placer country of Montana to return to "the States". Of these, significant numbers floated the Yellowstone in mackinaw boats, but these parties stuck to the River.

During 1863-1864, John M. Bozeman, who described himself as



a "speculator", and an associate, John Jacobs, promoted the use of a trail that connected segments of ancient trails noted by Reynolds, to form a shortcut from the main transcontinental trails on the Platte to Montana. Soon known as "the Montana Road", and today more commonly called the "Bozeman Trail", this route passed about 30 miles southwest of the southwesternmost corner of the Park. As they had for the traders, this route and the Yellowstone drew off most travel and travelers taking them bypassed the Park by a considerable margin.

Montana's desire to open up every possible route of travel through the Indian Country to the States did, however, occasion considerable military activity in the region.

By the early 1860's, the Crow Indians, who had been the dominant tribe on the Yellowstone since the days of the first explorers were in trouble. Lured on by both the teeming buffalo herds on the plains, and the extensive horse herds of their western neighbors, the numerous and powerful Dakotas or Sioux, crossed the Missouri in the mid-Eighteenth Century and pushed swiftly west to the Black Hills. Beyond this point they quickly came in contact with the Crows, and intensive inter-tribal warfare developed. The Sioux outnumbered the Crow about ten to one, and were generally allied to the Cheyennes, who nearly matched the numbers of the Crows. Fortunately, the patterns of intertribal warfare kept the Sioux and their allies from combining to destroy the Crows, but through incessant pressure they pushed the Crows steadily westward, compressing their territory against the eastward moving Montana mining frontier. At the same time the Sioux and Cheyennes found frequent targets of opportunity in the stream of emigrant traffic and communications links along the old Oregon-California Trail and the newer Overland Trail across southern Wyoming.

Congress in 1862 and 1864 passed legislation to both authorize and encourage the construction of a major transcontinental railroad on a central route that would follow a route in the vicinity of the two major transcontinental trails through



southern Wyoming. This was understood from the outset to be a major national undertaking, in terms of capital requirements, labor, materials and engineering talent. Its completion was viewed as a matter of major national interest and given extensive financial and other support by the government.

Detailed surveys and the beginnings of construction were scheduled to get underway in 1865. The Army foresaw the potential for much trouble with the Sioux and Cheyennes along the route through southern Wyoming.

In an effort to keep the hostile Indians away from the line of railroad survey and construction, they first sent a massive three-pronged punitive expedition into the region, commanded by Brigadier General Patrick E. Connor in late summer of 1865.

Connor's columns fought important engagements on Powder River and on Tongue River. They built a new fort on the Powder well upstream into Wyoming, and after leaving a garrison there, withdrew.

The next spring, in 1866, Colonel Henry B. Carrington led a substantial portion of the 18th U. S. Infantry up the Bozeman Trail to build forts and in general keep the Indians busy in this area so the railroad could slip across southern Wyoming unmolested. Their activities for the next two years were closely confined to the line of that trail, and so had no effect over here in the Rosebud Creek country.

With the railroad completed past the point of Indian danger in the summer of 1868, troops were withdrawn from the Bozeman Trail. The main effect in this immediate area was upon the Crows, who now found it unsafe to venture in anything but small war parties east of the Big Horn.

Over the next two years, even the country west of the Big Horn became more perilous for them, as Sioux war parties extended their own raids farther to the west. In the early 1870's, they began to strike at travelers on the upper Yellowstone and around Bozeman Pass.



There, the Sioux ran into the fringe of Montana's eastward moving frontier. Prospectors, wolfers, and a few cattlemen edged over Bozeman Pass and down the Yellowstone in the early Seventies.

Supporting this eastward movement, Bozeman merchants and adventurers set up the "Yellowstone Wagon road and Prospecting Expedition" in the winter of 1874. This force of a hundred and forty men ranged down the Yellowstone to the lower Rosebud in what appears to have been a calculated attempt to start an Indian War. On their way back to the Montana settlements they passed down Gray Blanket Creek about 20 miles northwest of the Park.

The Sioux continued their raids on the Crows and on the Montanans. The Indian Bureau called for protection for their friendly Crows. And soon pressure built up from several directions to intensify long existing hostilities.

THE MAJOR INDIAN CAMPAIGNS

The 1876-77 campaigns against the Sioux and Cheyennes arose out of a combination of factors. First, the large number of non-treaty bands of Sioux, along with the Northern Cheyennes spent an increasing amount of their time in the western fringe of the "Unceded Territory" still open to them under the Treaty of 1868. From this base, they and bands that left the agencies to summer here each year, increased the frequency and severity of their raids against the Crows and the Shoshoni. They persistently harrassed the Crow Agency itself, and raided settlements on the Upper Yellowstone, around Bozeman Pass, and through the Shields River and Smith River country, well outside the limits they were supposed to accept. Then in 1874, the official confirmation of gold discoveries in the Black Hills brought a flood of prospectors into the Hills, which lay within the Sioux Reservation proper.

Unsuccessful negotiations in the fall of 1875 led then to a recommendation by the Indian Bureau that the Army be used to

compel all the Sioux and Cheyennes to come in to the agencies in the spring of 1876. The Sioux failed to respond to an ultimatum to this effect, and a massive campaign was set in motion.

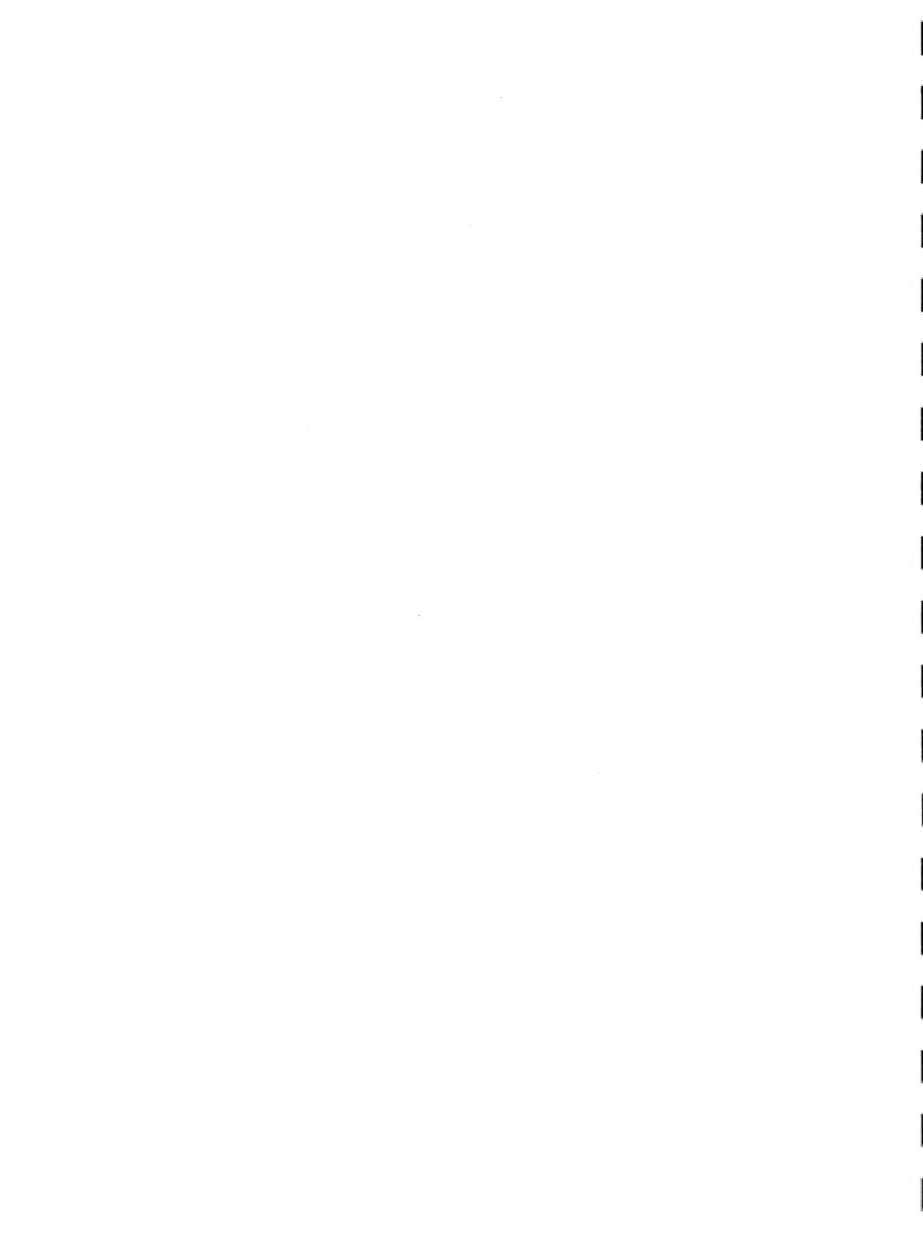
The Park lay within the Department of Dakota. This major command had its headquarters in St. Paul, Minnesota, and was commanded by Brigadier General Alfred H. Terry. Directly to the south of the area lay the northern boundary of the Department of the Platte, which headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska. This command was in charge of Brigadier General George Crook.

Terry developed plans for troops in posts in western and central Montana to be gathered under command of Colonel John Gibbon and push down the Yellowstone. Terry himself would take the major available striking force in the Department out across country to the Yellowstone, and probe the lands south of the Yellowstone to seek the hostiles. Terry's force had the considerable advantage of supply by streamboats operating on the River.

Crook was dependent on wagon and pack transportation, and thus limited to fairly fast strike operations from his most advanced base at Fort Fetterman, on the North Platte River. Crook's command was the better prepared for the campaign as winter drew toward a close in 1876.

Crook took his key personal staff into the field along with a small force under the command of Colonel J. J. Reynolds on March 1st. They pushed rapidly north over the Bozeman Trail to Tongue River, and followed the stream down into Montana. At the mouth of Pumpkin Creek on March 14th, they turned east toward Otter Creek, where they sighted several Indians on the 16th. Crook ordered Reynolds to take part of the force and seek and destroy the Indian village.

Gibbon moved down the Yellowstone and set up a base camp, from which parties searched for the hostile Indians. Terry brought his massive column out from Dakota to strike the Yellowstone. He sent out battalion sized scouting expeditions to search the tributaries that came in from the south. One of these, under



Major Marcus A. Reno, found a major hostile trail headed up the Rosebud and turned downstream to report this fact to Terry.

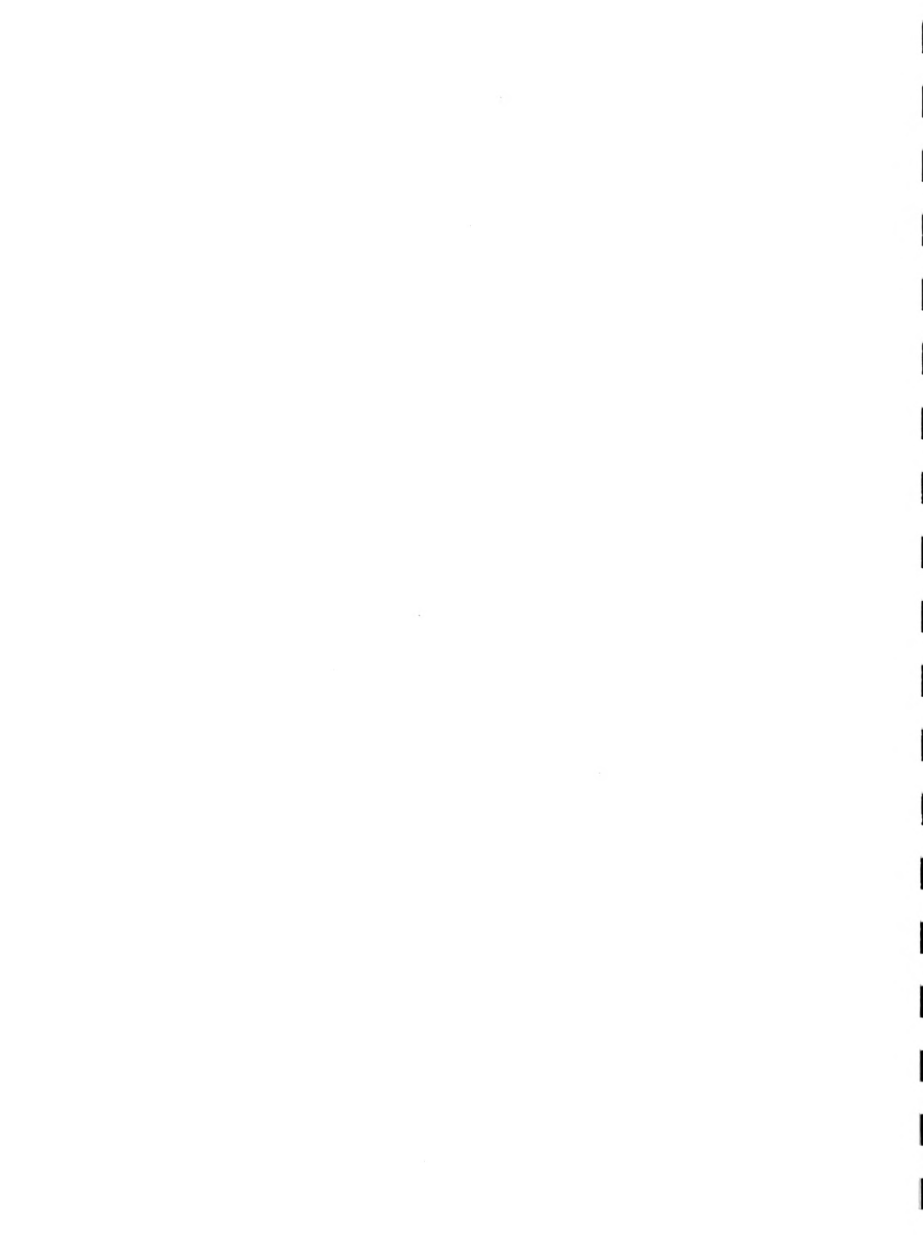
While all this was taking place, Crook was having his own problems in his new summer campaign.

On May 29th, Crook's forces once again headed north from Ft. Fetterman. In mid-June Crook learned of the existence of a Sioux village in the Rosebud Valley and immediately set out in that direction. His column, consisting of 979 soldiers, 262 Indian scouts, 20 packers, and 65 miners, found those Indians on the morning of March 17, 1876.

They were a band of approximately 1,500 Sioux and Cheyennes led by Crazy Horse. The battle that ensued lasted for most of the day, until the Sioux broke off the fight for unknown reasons. Although the Indians retreated and left the battlefield to Crook, the Battle of the Rosebud was a draw. Neither side had been defeated. Nine of Crook's men had been killed and the remainder returned to their former campsite near the present town of Sheridan on the 19th. There they waited for essential supplies and reinforcements.

Participating in Crook's march to the Rosebud and back was Captain W. S. Stanton, Engineer Officer for the Department of the Platte. His log precisely details their movements from the base camp on the Sheridan site to the Rosebud and return, and we feel it is worth reproducing here:

June 16 - "At 6 a.m., General Crook, with all the cavalry, and the infantry mounted on mules, headed for the Rosebud. The column is as light as possible, and is admirably equipped for celerity of movement. Each officer and man is limited to four days' rations, his overcoat, and one single blanket; the man carrying each 100 rounds of ammunition. The odometer-cart is the only vehicle in the column. The column crossed at camp to the left (west) bank of Goose Creek, and marched in a general course north-northwest 7 miles,



and route lying for the first 4 miles in the valley of the creek, and then on higher, broken and rolling ground; next morning northeast by north 4.25 miles, it crossed the deep and narrow valley of Tongue River, and climbed to the crest of the high ridge on its north side, gravelly and broken, with patches of sage and scattering pine-timber. Tongue River was crossed about 1 mile above the mouth of Goose Creek and is there about 100 feet wide, 2½ feet deep, with a strong current, low banks, and a good ford. Between the camp and the river the grass varies from good bottom and bunch grass in the valley of Goose Creek to fair bunch grass on the intervening higher ground, and is throughout mingled with occasional patches of sage. From the crest of the ridge bordering the river-valley, the route lay nearly north about 7.5 miles, through an excessively broken, rough, and stony country, to the narrow valley of a small stream draining apparently into Tongue River, but dry excepting in pools.

"The column next ascended this valley about 6.5 miles to its head, and reached the summit of the divide between the waters of the Tongue and the Rosebud, meeting a small herd of buffalo.

"From this summit the course lay about north-northwest 8 miles, over a region of high, rounded, and steep hills, with small miry streams at their bases, and abounding with excellent grass, to the Rosebud, on both banks of which headquarters and the cavalry bivouacked at 7:20 p.m., the infantry arriving somewhat later.

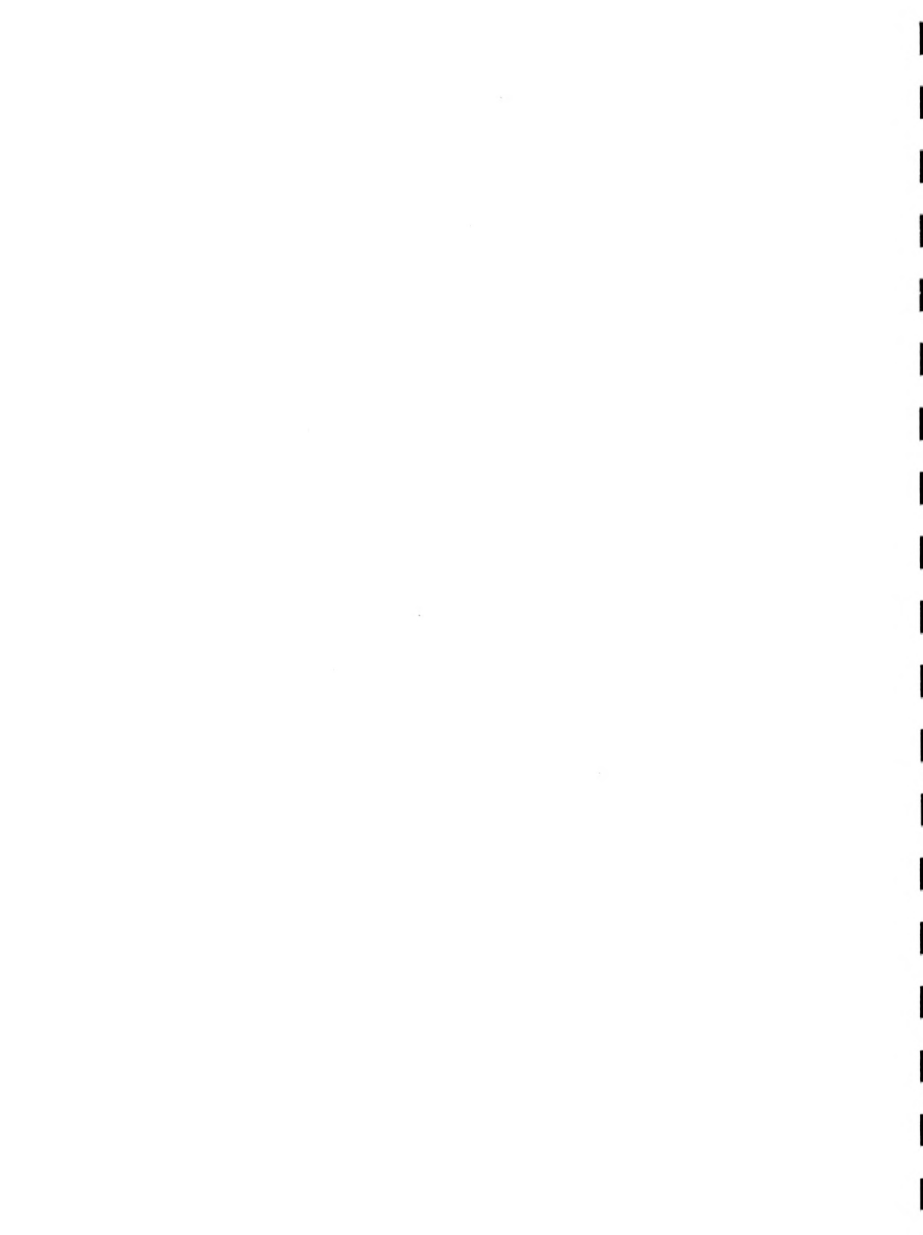
June 17 - "The column marched at 6:15 a.m., and moved down the valley of the Rosebud, closely following its left bank, in a general northeast direction, until

7:15, when it was halted to await information from the Indian scouts, who reported the Sioux in the vicinity. In about one hour, the Sioux appeared in force in the broken country immediately north of the Rosebud Valley, and an engagement at once ensued, continuing about four hours, and resulting in completely routing the enemy, undoubtedly with quite severe loss, the troops following some distance, and bivouacking at night unmolested in the valley of the creek where they halted just before the fight commenced. The field of the engagement is one of valleys and steep, rounded hills, merging into deep ravines, and steep, stony and somewhat rocky ridges, which in descending along the valley of the creek, or in advancing northward from it, at once become deeper, steeper, more broken, and precipitous, and sprinkled with pine-timber. It is a region very unfavorable for a pursuit and very favorable for concealing the position and strength of a force awaiting attack.

"The Rosebud in this vicinity is a stream of good water, four or five feet wide, an inch or two deep, with a slight current, a miry bed, with rather steep, muddy banks, and lying in a narrow bottom containing a few cottonwood trees and a thick growth of brushes and willows.

June 18 - "The column at 6:30 a.m. began its march to camp and moved up the left bank of the Rosebud to its source in a direction nearly southwest by west about 7 miles, reaching the narrow summit of a very high ridge dividing its water from the Tongue.

"The Rosebud is formed on the northwest slope of this ridge from several small brooks, and has a rapid descent for two or three miles through a narrow, grassy ravine, which then widens to a valley from 100 to 200 yards across, between the bivouacs of the 16th and 17th,

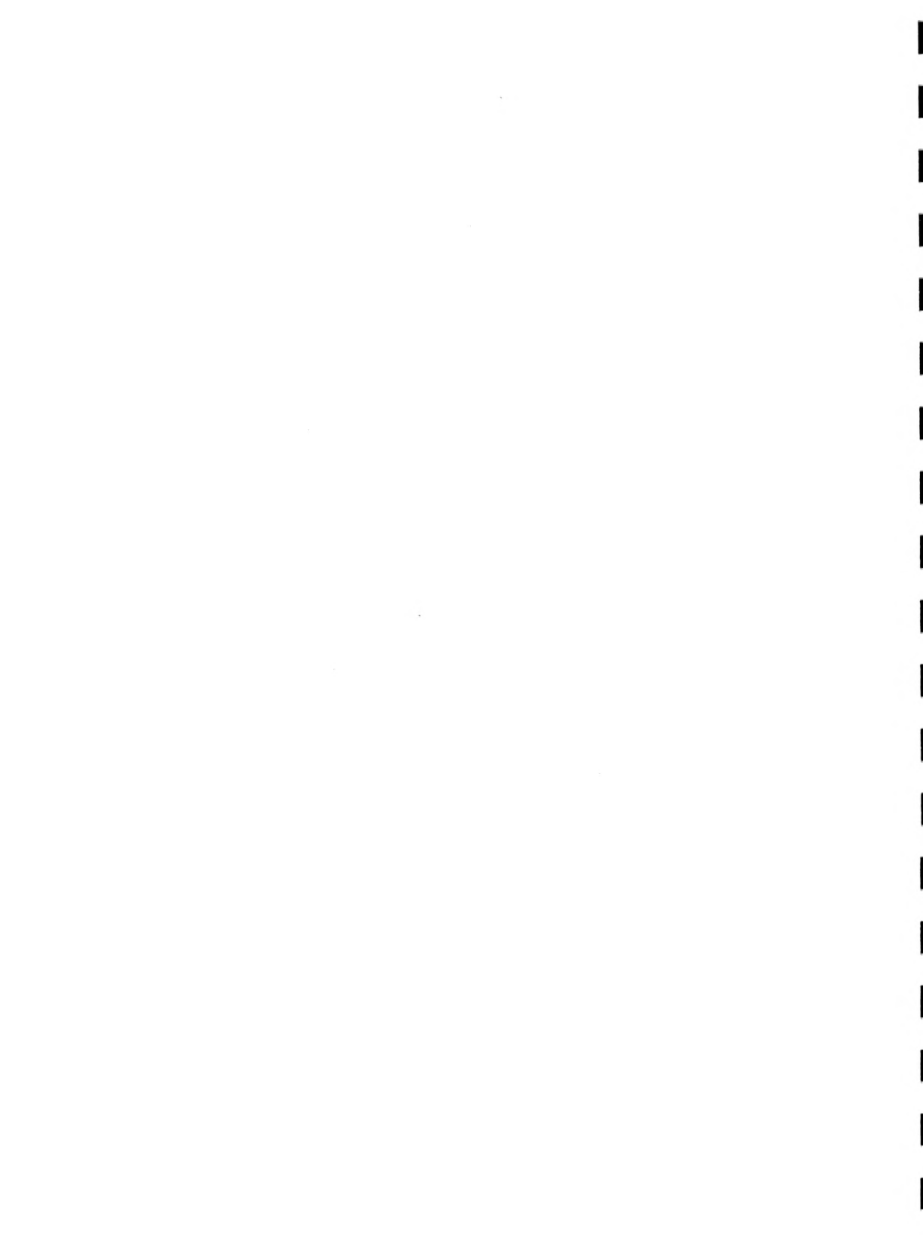


being bounded on the left bank by high, rounded, grassy hills, and on the right by higher, steeper, and rather rocky bluffs; the distant ranges on either bank being sprinkled with pine timber.

"This abruptly elevated region in which the Rosebud rises is one of marked topographical characteristics. From the summit of its culminating ridge, the Big Horn is in clear view from the bald promontory where it is pierced by the Big Horn River to Cloud Peak; extending far to the north lies the valley of the Little Big Horn, and to the northeast the valley of the Tongue, with the Wolf Mountains beyond. It is much to be regretted that the position of this point could not have been determined.

"The route was next very devious, on a course about south by west, continuing in this elevated region among high and steep, grass-covered hills and deep ravines, occasionally broken and stony. Bivouacked at 2 p.m. on a small stream of good water thickly fringed with bushes and a few trees, between towering hills, and flowing east-southeast, probably into the Tongue. Distance marched about 20 miles.

June 19 - "Marched at 5:30 a.m. Route devious, on a course about south by east, through the same elevated region of grassy hills and ravines, about 3.5 miles, to its southern limit. Next, after a very abrupt and steep descent, continued the same broken country, with gravelly soil, little or no grass, thick sage, and some cactus, to Tongue River; forded, and moving thereafter on a general southeast by east course, crossed first about 2.5 miles of the same barren, sage-covered region, next about 3 miles of comparatively level and better country, with better grass, to the old Fort C. F. Smith Road, which there lies along the northeast (left) bank of Beaver Creek, a stream about 6 or 8 feet wide and



18 inches deep, thickly fringed with bushes, with muddy banks, miry bed obstructed by beaver dams, and bad to cross; crossing the old road and the creek, the column kept its southeast by east course over a rolling and hilly country, about four miles to the wagon-train on the south (right) bank of Goose Creek, about three miles above the fork, it having moved there with camp on the 16th. The column, wagon-train, and pack-train crossed the fork about four miles to the left bank of the south branch of Goose Creek, about five miles above its mouth, and camped."

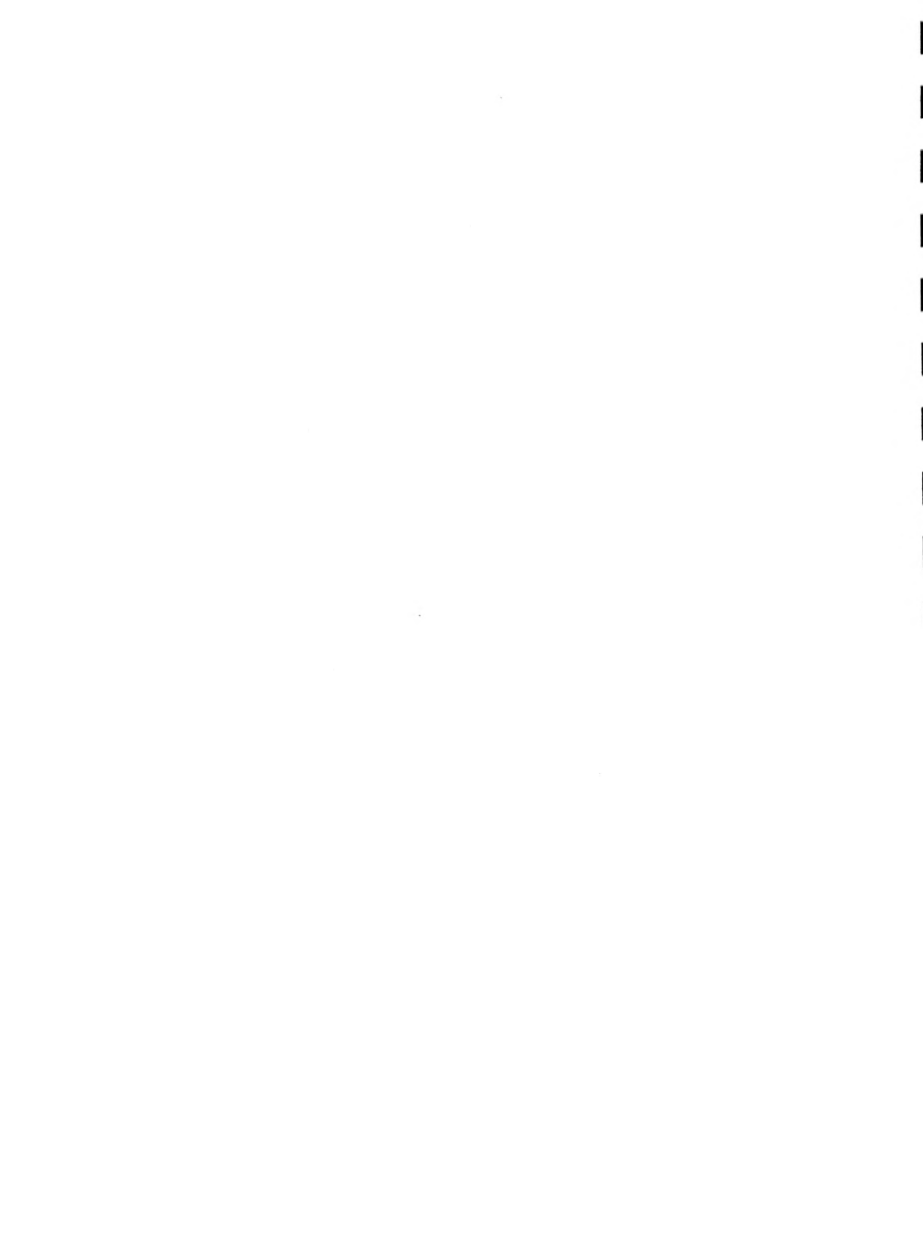
They first entered Montana from the Tongue River Valley following a ridge heading northwest along Spring Creek. Their route took them into the Crow Reservation and over a divide to camp on Rosebud about 2 miles above the forks.

On June 17, Crook moved his column out to continue their search for a major camp of hostile Sioux and Cheyenne. Ironically, one of the largest Indian war parties ever to assemble on the plains was also out---looking for soldiers.

At 8 A. M., Crook called a rest for his forces, on the main stream of Rosebud Creek, at a point some distance east of Kollmar Creek.

Crook's column, ready for a long day's march, was strung out over five miles along the valley floor. Some of the soldiers had unsaddled their mounts; others had started to make coffee. It was then that the Crow and Shoshoni scouts and auxiliaries sighted the Sioux and Cheyennes coming over the hills from the North and Northwest. The hostiles were in no sense a disciplined or organized party, but their traditional mode of hunting and warfare dictated a most appropriate tactic for the immediate situation. They fanned out to seek individual targets of opportunity, such as grazing stock, scattered groups of soldiers, stragglers, etc.

Crook's enlisted Crow and Shoshoni scouts, and their unpaid relatives and friends who had come along as auxiliaries, charged



up the slope to meet the onrushing Sioux and Cheyenne. The traditional charges and counter-charges between the two Indian forces lasted 20 minutes or more----time for Crook to organize a defense and counter-measures. Crook sent Captain Anson Mills with a force of cavalry to drive the Sioux and Cheyenne off points to the Northeast, because he knew control of the high ground was likely to be a major factor in the course of the battle. He then pushed a force of infantry skirmishers forward to take a high knoll (now called "Crook's Hill" by scholars, and the location of the present monument). This formed a central point in his operations throughout the fight. Captain Frederick Van Vleit, with two infantry companies, was sent to a bluff to the south of the valley to defend that area while Crook's column closed up along the trail from the old campsite. All the while irregular skirmishes occurred intermittently along the northwest flanks of his command, with the Crows and Shoshoni playing a key role.

Crook then launched a counter-thrust toward the Northwest, led by Captain William H. Andrews, Co. I, 3rd Cavalry. Part of the force reached as far as a high hill now called "Andrews Point." This diverted some of the Sioux and Cheyennes away from Crook's main force and broke the building concentration of hostiles in that area.

Crook's forces were now assembled in a more useful fashion than when the battle began, and he launched drives trying to secure control of key parts of the high ground. Captain William Royall led a foray west. He almost reached Andrew's Point but was overextended and retreated in several steps under Indian harassment.

In the early phase of the battle, the fight was one of rapid movement: troops repeatedly breaking up Indian concentrations through organized skirmishes or long range rifle volleys; Indians using the rough ground cover to reach isolated small detachments, capture horses and pack animals and generally harass Crook's men. Both sides fought well and with valor



according to their drastically different views of warfare.

In the early afternoon, Crook, thinking the Indian camp lay not far downstream, launched a bold stroke. He sent much of his cavalry, under Captain Mills, out in a sweeping charge downstream around the bend of the Rosebud valley and then northward down it. Mills found, not a camp, but swarms of hostiles in the rough breaks along the stream and he swung to the west up a convenient little valley. He then cut directly across country to Crook's main force, surprising and breaking up several hostile concentrations with his sudden appearance on the way.

And then the battle ended ----indecisively.

Almost as suddenly as they had appeared, the Indians began to disappear from the scene of the fight. Casualties were light on both sides: 9 soldiers killed, 13 wounded sufficiently to require medical attention; probably around 100 Indians killed and wounded.

After six and a half hours of fighting and no conclusive victory, the fight was over for various reasons. Men and especially horses were tired. The hostile Indians were chronically short of ammunition and carried little food and water into battle. The troops had expended most of their supplies of ammunition (over 25,000 rounds). The Indians, sated with abundant individual acts of valor went home to rest, eat and celebrate in traditional fashion.

Crook, left in unchallenged possession of the field, considered it a major victory. Now convinced of the numbers and fighting qualities of the hostiles, and recognizing his shortage of supplies and ammunition for a long campaign, Crook withdrew toward his base camp on Big Goose Creek on the 18th. On the 20th, he moved to a better location near present Big Horn, Wyoming, and waited the arrival of supplies and reinforcements.

The Sioux and Cheyenne celebrated in their camps along Reno Creek. As more and more of their tribesmen moved in, their camps spread down to the Little Horn, and on down it to the

point where the ill-fated Custer expedition found them on June 25th.

The Battle of the Rosebud was one of the major fights of the 1876 campaigns. It and the Custer disaster of June 25-26, were significantly instrumental in reshaping public opinion and national policy in favor of forcefully ending the "Indian Question" on the plains as a military problem. The battle also contributed to the traditional and folklore of the combatant Indians on both sides. Indian participants revisited the site for years and their descendants still keep alive the stories associated with the stone markers scattered over the field. As for the Army participants, good combat reputations were made for many. Crook ultimately commanded the Army itself. Of the 38 company grade officers in the fight, four eventually wore a general's star and three others commanded regiments in the small Regular Army.

With this level of national significance, the site was entered on the National Register of Historic Places some years ago. Several historical groups have erected markers there.

The portion of the battle area within the park is virtually unchanged since the fight. The overall integrity of the historic scene here is superb.

Terry and Crook both took the field again late in the summer of 1876. Moving toward one another, they met on the lower Rosebud and combined forces and moved off to the east. Passing out of the region without incident, they then split up again, with Terry's heavily laden columns returning to the River and Crook striking out into Dakota to fight the battles of Slim Buttes and withdraw to the south.

In the meantime Congress had appropriated the necessary funds to erect two forts in the Yellowstone country. In September, Miles was directed to build one of those forts at the mouth of the Tongue. The Tongue River Cantonment was erected, but replaced in 1877 by a permanent post, Fort Keogh, with Miles in

command. Construction on the second fort, named Custer, started in 1877 near the mouth of the Little Big Horn, and a supply base called Terry's Landing was built on the Yellowstone that same year.

Frequent patrols out from the various forts in the region quickly interdicted the hostile Indians' freedom of movement and ended their opportunities to subsist by buffalo hunting. Commercial buffalo hide hunters swiftly exterminated the great herds in the period 1879-1883, and in the same period, open-range cattlemen brought their herds into the region from the west and from the south to begin the settlement era.

THE SETTLEMENT ERA

The earliest open range cattle outfits operated out of headquarters nearer the main lines of communication. Hardin and Campbell, who were early lease-holders on the Crow Reservation to the west, had one major headquarters on the Yellowstone, and another near present Ranchester, over in Wyoming. The O. D. Ranch at the mouth of Corral Creek, and the O. W., to the east on Hanging Woman, dominated the bulk of grazing activity in the area until the early 1900's.

By 1912, changes in the homestead laws permitted settlers to take up a half-section of land as their basic homestead and sometimes to acquire additional land under other provisions of the land laws. This encouraged additional settlement in the high plains.

At just this time, Elmer, "Slim", Kobold hiked out from the railroad at Sheridan, Wyoming, in search of work. He found it for the season with ranchers downstream on the Rosebud. He wintered with "Packsaddle Jack", Morrison, a colorful old western character in a cabin still standing on the Penson Ranch nearby, and in 1912 filed on a homestead that became the central part of his ranch headquarters. Except for service in Siberia with the Army in the World War I period, Slim lived in this area from

that time forward.

The 1914-1921 period saw most of the public land taken up as homesteads, but the disastrous drop in farm and ranch commodity prices in the fall of 1921 brought a mass exodus by the least well-fixed homesteaders. From that time forward changing economic conditions brought about a steady consolidation of ranching units, with the Kobold holdings enlarging to the limits of the present park.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

All told, the history of Rosebud Battlefield spans several thousand years of archeological record and a short but intense cross-section of the development history of the region. Much additional local history could eventually be developed from documentary and oral sources by an active park historian here.

The interpretive story has sufficient depth that master planners, interpretive planners and exhibits artists associated with development over the years need to have some guidance in where-to-find certain kinds of information. We have appended a basic bibliography on the region that will cover most of the major published sources that are available.

Within this, there are some key items that deserve immediate attention by anyone interested in any phase of development here.

The master work on the Rosebud Battle is J. W. Vaughn's With Crook at the Rosebud. I knew Vaughn personally for some years, and can attest to his skill as a searcher for documentary materials and his energy and thoroughness at field work with the metal detector on sites such as this. While it was obviously impossible for one man to cover every single portion of such a large field in a few summer expeditions, Vaughn did his best to attempt it. Together with Slim Kobold's still sharp knowledge of sites where major battlefield artifact finds have been made, the Vaughn study remains the major resource on physical evidence at the site. The only substantial scholarly weakness in Vaughn's



work seems to be the tendency to elevate the Oglala Indian, Crazy Horse, to a level of command such as did not exist in the Indian society. His photo, alleged to be Crazy Horse, is that of another Oglala, named Crazy-in-the-Lodge, as Harry Anderson's skillful pictorial research revealed some years ago.

But the Vaughn work remains essential reading for an interpreter on the area.

John S. Gray's recent book Centennial Campaign helps to put Crook's campaigns into better regional context than most other studies on the Indian Wars and details movements of Indian forces in the field that year better than any other book.

Oliver Knight's book Following the Indian Wars contains a valuable chapter on the Rosebud Battle that provides easy access to the view of the campaign in the writings of the newspaper correspondents that accompanied the troops in the field.

John F. Finerty's War Path and Bivouac contains a major chapter on this campaign by that skilled and outspoken correspondent.

Frank Guard's book, unfortunately over-edited by Joe DeBarthe, provides some insight into what a seasoned civilian frontiersman thought of the troops and their officers.

We are providing xeroxes of the single-chapter studies of the fight from these, as well as from George Bird Grinnell's Fighting Cheyennes, the best Indian account of the fight, although written strictly from the Cheyenne viewpoint.

We are also providing xeroxes of transcripts of major unpublished military correspondence including a copy of Crook's official report on the fight.

Using these materials as a nucleus, and our bibliography as a guide, we would suggest that the Division begin to assemble the beginnings of a park interpreter's library against the eventual time when someone will be stationed there and involved in intensive public contact work. It has been our experience that this is essential for any manned historic or natural area.



On-site-personnel cannot depend on distant public libraries to fulfill their needs for references to build their own knowledge and to effectively answer the multitude of visitor questions that will arise the moment someone is on site, representing the agency.

Our recommendations for early-stage interpretive development are submitted as a separate document.

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